Employment lands report released

A report which provides suggestions on how to increase Sydney’s supply of market-ready employment land has been released by the Department of Planning and Infrastructure today.

The report was prepared by the Employment Lands Task Force, which includes industry stakeholders and government agencies.

“This report finds that, as at January 2011, there was three years’ supply of serviced vacant employment land ready for the market, in the event there is a strong development activity in the metropolitan area,” the department’s Deputy Director-General Ian Reynolds said.

“This is below the 5-7 year supply benchmark.

“It also finds there is ample land zoned for employment purposes but that much of this land is not yet connected to sewer or water infrastructure.

“The report includes a number of suggestions from stakeholder representatives on the Task Force about how to increase the supply of employment land, including by allowing a wider range of employment uses in existing industrial areas.”

Employment lands are concentrated areas of economic activity outside urban centres and are zoned for manufacturing, warehousing, urban services and utilities, research and administration and other similar uses.

The report draws on data from the Employment Lands Development Program which found that as of January 2011 the Sydney Region - which includes the Central Coast – had 15,584 hectares of land zoned for employment, including:

- 3,651 hectares of zoned, undeveloped land without water and sewer services – enough for 12 years, assuming a high take-up rate of 300 hectares per year; and
- 892 hectares of zoned, undeveloped land with water and sewer services connected - enough for almost three years.

The report also listed a further 3,337 hectares of land identified in planning strategies and likely to be rezoned for employment in the future as current supplies are taken up.

“We want to ensure there is a wide range of jobs available close to where people live, to reduce commute distances and allow people to spend more time with their families,” Mr Reynolds said.

The department is undertaking a two-stage audit of the zoned, undeveloped employment lands to identify reasons the land is undeveloped.

The first stage audited 20 major precincts covering 3,570 hectares of undeveloped zoned land, of which 2,970 hectares (83 per cent) is not yet connected to water and sewer
services. Most of those precincts are in Western Sydney near where major population growth is expected.

The second stage is looking at the servicing required to develop those precincts, including roads and electricity and other factors that may be constraints to development.

“This will give us the information we need to put in place the best strategies to get this land moving,” Mr Reynolds said.

The Employment Lands Task Force met five times across 2011 and includes senior staff from State agencies along with the Urban Development Institute of Australia, Property Council of Australia, Sydney Business Chamber, Urban Taskforce and local government and independent experts.

A departmental response to the issues raised by the stakeholder representatives on the Task Force has also been released, along with statistics from the latest Employment Lands Development Program update.

All reports can be found at www.planning.nsw.gov.au/employment-lands

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